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Security Council

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Letter dated 4 November 2013 from the Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter from the representative of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces dated 4 November 2013 in advance of the briefing by the Special Coordinator of the Joint Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations to the Security Council to be held on 5 November 2013 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you could have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Csaba **Kőrösi**
Ambassador

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Annex to the letter dated 4 November 2013 from the Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On behalf of the people of Syria and the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, I have the honour to refer to the United Nations Security Council briefing by the Special Coordinator of the Joint Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations, to be held on Tuesday, 5 November.

Just over two months ago, on 21 August 2013, the Assad regime launched a series of large-scale chemical weapons attacks on the citizens of Eastern Ghouta in Damascus. These attacks killed over 1,400 people, more than 400 of whom were children.

On 13 September 2013, the United Nations Secretary-General delivered to the Security Council the report on the alleged use of chemical weapons in the Ghouta area of Damascus on 21 August 2013 (A/67/997-S/2013/553). This report confirmed that chemical weapons had been used and all available evidence demonstrated that only the regime could have committed this attack.

In his remarks, the Secretary-General strongly condemned the use of chemical weapons, and noted specifically that the decision to use these weapons was "a war crime and grave violation of the 1925 Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare and other relevant rules of customary international law".

In response to this grave violation of international law, the Security Council adopted Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) and unanimously determined that "the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic constitutes a threat to international peace and security". This resolution instructed the Assad regime to comply fully with all aspects of the OPCW Executive Council's decision regarding the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons.

The Syrian Coalition has welcomed Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), and we have expressed our willingness to support all efforts to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons programme, including by offering our full cooperation with both the United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and the Joint Mission of OPCW and the United Nations throughout the liberated territories of Syria.

After years of denial and deceit about the existence of its chemical weapons programme — and only under the threat of military intervention by members of the Security Council — on 21 September 2013 the Assad regime publicly revealed to OPCW that it had a total of 41 facilities in which chemical weapons were alleged to have been produced and in many cases where filling and mixing equipment was stored. The world has no objective guarantee that Assad has in fact disclosed all of Syria's chemical weapons facilities. It is therefore of critical importance that the international community remain vigilant in ensuring the complete disclosure and disarmament of the Assad regime's chemical weapons programme.

In particular, it is incumbent upon the Security Council to ensure and verify that the Assad regime complies fully and transparently with the continued work of the Joint Mission of OPCW and the United Nations. It remains a source of concern

that the Joint Mission has been unable to gain access to 2 of the 41 disclosed production facilities in Syria. As the Secretary-General has stated, it is the ultimate responsibility of the Assad regime to ensure the full destruction of Syria's chemical weapons and production facilities, as well as the security of all OPCW and United Nations personnel. The Security Council must be rigorous in verifying authoritatively that the Assad regime is in fact meeting that responsibility.

Any attempts by the Assad regime to delay or impede the work of the Joint Mission must be met with immediate and severe consequences. Attempts by the Assad regime to ignore its legal responsibilities in the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons programme must be treated under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, as stipulated by the Security Council in its resolution 2118 (2013). It will also be important that the joint Mission carefully scrutinize the regime's proposed list of requirements for the implementation of its destruction of Syria's chemical weapons programme. Any items that may have practical military applications that can be used against Syria's people must be denied by the Joint Mission.

The destruction of Syria's chemical weapons programme is an important first step in response to the attacks on 21 August 2013. It is critical to note, however, that Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) stipulates that "those responsible for any use of chemical weapons must be held accountable". Yet, two months after one of the single gravest war crimes committed in the twenty-first century, the perpetrators of this attack remain in power, and they continue to terrorize unarmed Syrian civilians indiscriminately.

Moreover, the world must recognize that the disarmament of the Assad regime's chemical weapons has done little to bring relief to the people of Syria. Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), more than 2,800 Syrians have died as a result of regime attacks. While the international community has concentrated its efforts on one small dimension of the conflict, the Assad regime has continued to brutalize and murder Syrian civilians using conventional methods of warfare.

The Assad regime is now seeking to force Syrians into submission through wide-scale starvation. Media have widely reported that regime forces are laying siege to opposition-held territories, and tightening blockades that seek to induce starvation and death. More than 300,000 Syrians are currently trapped in Homs province alone. Thousand of Syrians are being denied access to basic goods like bread, medicine and drinking water and, as a consequence, are suffering from dehydration, severe weight loss and diarrhoea, with potentially lethal consequences. Such actions are in direct violation of the 2 October Security Council presidential statement (S/PRST/2013/15), as well as of article 8 of the Rome Statute.

The Security Council remains the only international body capable of preventing such violations. It must condemn and help stop the Syrian regime from employing starvation as an instrument of war, including by passing a resolution dedicated to improving the humanitarian situation in Syria.

The time has come to end the conflict in Syria. Only a transfer of full executive authorities to a transitional government can achieve this goal. The international community must make the Assad regime understand that Assad has no role to play in any transition to a future democratic Syria. Only the credible

assurance of Assad's departure, and the establishment of a transitional governing body with full executive powers, can permanently end the conflict in Syria and pave the way for an inclusive process of reconciliation, reconstruction and democracy in Syria.

(*Signed*) Najib **Ghadbian**
Special Representative of the Syrian Coalition
to the United Nations